

# IOWA BIRD LIFE

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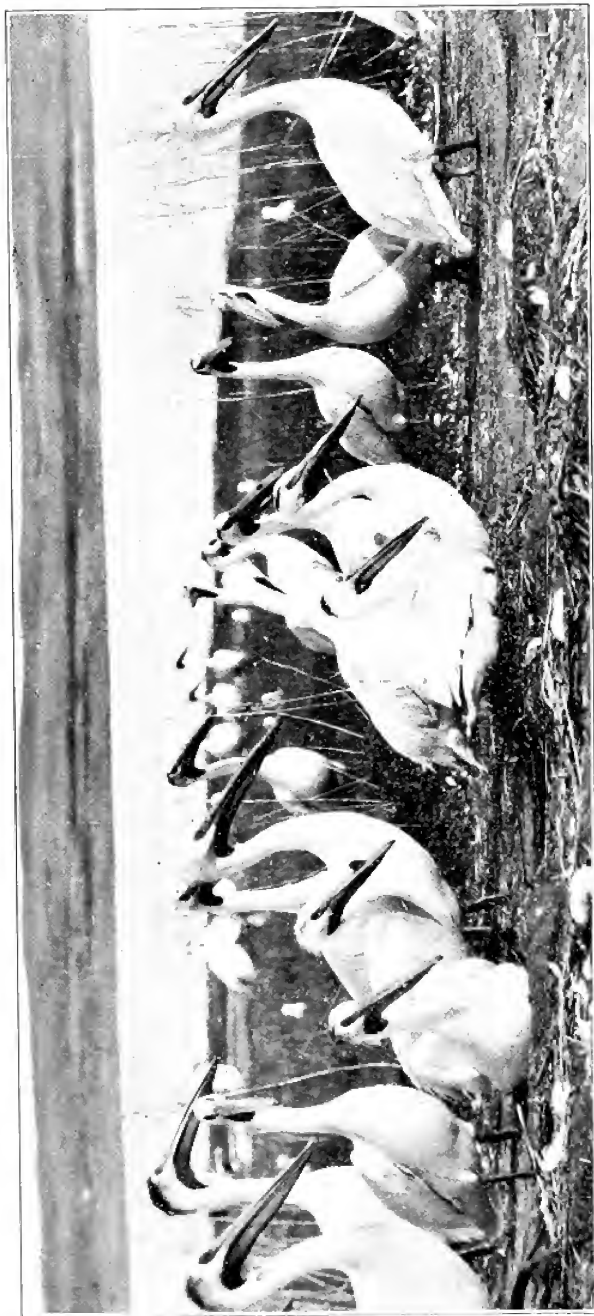
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Field Notes on Iowa birds, book news, and historical or biographical material pertaining to Iowa ornithology are desired for publication.

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WINTHROP, IOWA

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Courtesy of the Wilson Bulletin

#### A COLONY OF NESTING WHITE PELICANS

Once such a scene as this could be witnessed on some of the northern Iowa lakes, according to early settlers, but now the only known colony of these nesting birds in the United States east of Yellowstone Park is at Chase Lake, North Dakota, where this photograph was taken. The draining of large areas of Iowa's lake and marsh land was followed by depletion of the supply of fish, and soon the numbers of pelicans began to diminish. Present day Iowa bird students consider themselves fortunate when they catch sight of a small flock of these stately birds as they pass by in their migrations. The photograph was taken by Walter W. Bennett.

## LOCAL CHECK-LISTS AND MIGRATION DATA

By T. C. STEPHENS

## The Local Check-List

There are several lines of study which may be taken up in any locality with the possibility of yielding valuable results, provided the student is willing to take the trouble to keep his field notes accurately and faithfully. One such line of work is the preparation of a check-list. A check-list is an accurate list of all the species which are known to have been found within the area treated. Sometimes an annotated check-list is called a catalog.

The American Ornithologists' Union has prepared a continental check-list for North America, and most states have an authoritative state check-list. Such state lists can be accurately prepared only when there is accurate knowledge of the distribution of all species in the different parts of the state. And so the local, or county, check-list becomes very desirable from this point of view. It may also serve as a guide and sort of balance-wheel in local study.

Such a check-list is compiled with very great critical care, and all doubtful records must be excluded from it. The author at once becomes responsible for the accuracy of his list; and if he uses the observations of others he is equally responsible for the publication of them. It is his business to verify before publishing. In the case of rare or unlikely species within a given area it may be necessary to require the specimen in substantiation of the claim. Thus, it may take considerable time to build a check-list up to a point where it may be regarded as approximately complete—especially is this true for smaller areas. When is a check-list complete? No one can say, of course, because strangers may accidentally come within the area at any time. The breeding species and regular migrants are fairly constant from year to year, and may be fairly well ascertained in five or six years' work. It may be safely said that no check-list should be published on less than five years' work, and ten would be better. Unless one is engaged professionally in the study of birds, the preparation of a check-list might well be a life work.

Check-lists which are compiled from memory are of very little value. Recollections have but very limited scientific value. Hence the necessity of note-books. In the matter of publication it is in the unwritten code of ethics that the right of way belongs to the first in the field, except by the extenuation of other circumstances.

Where the station of observation is near a state boundary, great care should be exercised to keep separately the records on the two sides of the line. This is not so important, perhaps, for the study of the migratory movements of the birds; but it does become very important in the preparation of check-lists. The same statement might become applicable to county boundaries.

## Migration

There are many problems concerning bird migration, most of which are to be solved only by local observations covering several years. How far north and how far south do the various species go? What are the periods of their movements? With what average speed does such movement progress? Does each species follow a definite path, or route, constantly, and is it a broad, narrow, or converging path? When may a species be expected at any given point? Do the sexes travel together? Does the migratory movement have any relation to climatic conditions? And so on. Answers have been found to some of these questions concerning certain species.

We can have the full story of the ranges and movements of the birds only when we know all about them in each of the localities which they visit. Hence the necessity of local observations of which records are kept. Then the larger problem may be worked out as one solves a puzzle. To accomplish this there must be many trained observers well scattered throughout the area studied, say the North and South American continents. The observations should cover a sufficient number of years to give safe averages.

The Biological Survey of the government at Washington has undertaken to receive, file, and collate reports from localities. The late W. W. Cooke organized this work and became the foremost authority on bird migrations in America. To render service in this work the observer must know the birds of his locality. Then as they first appear in the migratory season the facts are recorded. We cannot emphasize too much the value of keeping an accurate account of the numbers of each species seen in each field trip, for only in this way can it be determined just when the movement is at its height. Oftentimes the numbers may be so large that an accurate count is out of the question; but an estimate is always better than no effort at enumeration, and will usually serve the purpose. As yet no one seems to have worked out an exact method of designating the relative abundance of a species locally. For a long time the following terms have been in use, viz., "Abundant," "Common," "Tolerably Common," and "Rare." It is clear that the denotation of these terms must vary with different observers, but perhaps we can do no better than follow this custom.

For the purpose of describing the status of a species at any particular station, the following terms are used: *Permanent residents* are the birds which remain throughout the year. *Winter visitors* are those which come into the area during the winter months, usually from the north. *Transient visitors* are those which pass over in the spring and back again in the fall; they are the "birds of passage." *Summer residents* are those which nest and breed within the area, though, of course, they are also migrants. *Accidental visitors* are those which stray into the area from irregular causes—(Reprinted from *Iowa Conservation*, July-Sept., 1919.)

## OUR TENTH ANNUAL MEETING

By KATE E. LA MAR

The tenth annual meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union was opened in the Venetian Room of Hotel Savery, Des Moines, at 9:45 A. M. Friday, May 13, 1932. The opening remarks were made by A. J. Palas who introduced the President, Dr. Roberts. Mrs. O. E. Gilcrest, in behalf of the Des Moines Audubon Society, welcomed the members and guests.

Judge O. S. Thomas of Rock Rapids gave a paper on "Birds in Our Back Yard." The list was a very interesting one, due to the fact that Rock Rapids is in a prairie region of Iowa with little or no timber near. It has the record of having a Brown Thrasher all winter. One industrious Robin had two mates and zealously guarded both nests.

In the absence of her son Philip A. DuMont, Mrs. W. G. DuMont read his paper, "A Report on the Revised Nomenclature of the List of Iowa Birds." The paper had material for thought and discussion in a remarkably progressive way.

Dr. T. C. Stephens of Sioux City presented a paper "A New Book on Iowa Bird Life—Needs, Plans and Difficulties". He pointed out the fact that the present book on Iowa birds is more than twenty years old and that a new book is much needed. The fundamental steps for making a new book necessitates the scientific collecting of birds. Records based on present collections should be revised, some records eliminated

and other records added. Some subspecies should be questioned, maps of the range of each species of uneven distribution in the state should be made, and a complete bibliography should be compiled. Much work by many persons will be needed to work out an accurate list.

Dr. Roberts led a Round-table discussion on "Hawks and Owls and Conservation of Shore-birds," in which he pointed out the value of hawks and owls and requested members and friends of the Union to spread information concerning the value of these birds in as many ways as possible. The hawks and owls are being killed not because of real knowledge of the birds and their habits, but because of lack of knowledge of them. In the discussion that followed Mr. Rosene and Drs. Hendrickson and Errington related experiences which amplified Dr. Roberts' defense of the raptores.

The meeting adjourned until after lunch, which was served in the Florentine Room of the hotel. A group photograph was made just before lunch. The afternoon session began at 2:15. Mrs. J. E. Stewart in a paper entitled "Nesting of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in Polk County," gave data on the nesting of a pair of these birds near Des Moines in 1930. As nearly as could be checked, twenty-three days were needed for nesting—twelve or thirteen days for incubation and ten or eleven days for feeding the young in the nest.

Mrs. C. J. Fulton gave "Early Experiences of Fairfield Birders." The paper was very interesting. Mrs. C. C. Flodin gave in detail a report of the work of their two-year-old society in "Developing Bird Consciousness." She spoke of the museum at Coe College, Cedar Rapids, and of the help that Mr. Kubichek gave the organization. Mr. Rosene's slides on "Exploring at Home" were most interesting.

Aldo Leopold of Madison, Wisconsin, who is in charge of the Iowa Game Survey, explained "The Role of the Ornithologist in the Iowa Game Program." He recommended a game system worked out to protect and increase game by natural means—a system set up by the people to leave natural covers and feeding corners in enough places to enable quail, grouse and Prairie Chickens to increase gradually and permanently. Many acres of waste land could be utilized by keeping stock out and letting underbrush and vegetation grow. Prairie Chickens and quail are disappearing rapidly, and unless nesting covers are provided they will become extinct. Mr. Leopold thinks that Iowa can have a system beyond the money appropriated by the State, one worked out by the people which does not necessitate outside help. A series of slides showed what game management would do to increase the game birds. The census showed a decrease in the number of quail even since the bird was put on the protected list, a condition resulting from the shrinkage of natural cover.

Two papers were read by titles in the absence of the authors—"Roadside Notes on a Trip to New Orleans and Wilson Ornithological Club Meeting," by O. P. Allert, and "Bird Gardening," by Prof. A. C. Hottes.

At 4:45 P. M. the business meeting was held. The minutes were read and approved and the reports of the several committees acting during the year were given. The report of the committee on scientific collecting permits was given considerable discussion, while the committee on preserving Jacksnipes made certain recommendations to the State Fish and Game Commission. A motion made by Mr. Junkin to appoint a Publicity Committee of two to work with Editor Pierce carried. The Resolutions Committee, composed of Dr. Hendrickson, chairman, and Mrs. Powell and Mr. Buzby, presented an interesting set of resolutions, a number of which were to thank various officers and committees for their efforts during the year and to voice the appreciation of the members of the results achieved. Space does not

permit the printing of the complete set of resolutions, but we make a few quotations below:

"Resolved, that we are in favor of maintaining the Bob-White on the list of song birds until good management changes the status of their population to safe numbers". "Resolved, that each member and the Union as a body will seek to educate the citizens of our state to check the general killing of hawks and owls". ". . . Be it resolved that we place ourselves on record as in favor of continued investigation by the State Fish and Game Commission to the end that their findings may substantiate the permanent protection of all shore-birds".

The Nominating Committee composed of Mrs. W. G. DuMont, Dr. T. C. Stephens and Walter Rosene, presented the list of officers for the coming year. These are given on the title page of the present issue.

The banquet was held at Younkers Tea Room at 6:30 P. M., with Mrs. A. J. Palas, president of the Des Moines Audubon Society, presiding. Those appearing on the banquet program were: Mrs. Mary L. Bailey, retiring Secretary of Iowa Ornithologists' Union; Dr. W. C. Boone, Chairman of Iowa Fish and Game Commission; Mrs. Henry Frankel, President of Iowa Board of Conservation; and Dr. Roberis, our President. A group of songs were sung by Mrs. Mabel Moss Madden. A discussion of nominees for Iowa State Bird resulted in the Goldfinch being chosen. Prof. W. F. Kubichek was the speaker of the evening, and his talk on "Recent Studies of Western Grebes, Double crested Cormorants and Blue Geese," illustrated by slides and moving pictures, was very interesting and very much enjoyed by all present.

On Saturday morning at 5:30 and 6:30 the members met at Hotel Savery for the start on two very interesting field trips. At noon the parties had returned from the trips and lunch was enjoyed at the Water Works Park. Here the complete bird list was compiled. The exact number of persons attending the meeting is not known. An effort was made to get everyone to register, but there were many who failed to do so.

**Attendance Register.**—AMES, Dr. and Mrs. G. O. Hendrickson, Chas. Vilbrandt; ATLANTIC, Mrs. Arthur Lee; BOONE, Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Buzby, Mrs. H. Hall; CEDAR RAPIDS, Lavinia Dragoo, Mrs. C. C. Flodin, W. F. Kubichek, Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Petranek, Mrs. Thos. Powell, Mrs. F. E. Russell, Lillian Serbousek, Lavinia Steele; DES MOINES, Mrs. E. O. Baumgardner, Miss Bickel, Mrs. H. A. Bruner, Mr. and Mrs. L. Bump, Mrs. C. F. Christy, J. L. Crane, Mr. and Mrs. A. F. Den Boer, Kate Donovan, Mr. and Mrs. W. G. DuMont, Mrs. Everett Farnham, Mrs. T. S. Farquharson, Anne Farquharson, Clara Fischer, Kirk Fox, Mrs. Henry Frankel, Mrs. L. E. Gibson, Mrs. O. E. Gilerist, Elmore and Ethel Goodwin, Mrs. Luella Higbie, Helen Hoodje, Mrs. Chas. Irish, Miss Ireland, Kate LaMar, Mrs. Margaret Lutton, Olivia McCabe, W. C. Nelson, Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Palas, Mrs. D. C. Paul, Mrs. H. R. Peasley, Mrs. H. M. Purvis, Mrs. J. W. Rehmann, Estella Reynolds, Edna Rounds, Mamie St. George, Mrs. Ray Scott, Mr. and Mrs. D. T. Smith, Irene Smith, Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Stewart, Edith Troutner, Mrs. T. R. Wendelburg; FAIRFIELD, Mrs. C. J. Fulton, Paul S. Junkin, Mrs. E. Labagh, Mrs. Ellsworth Turwey; IOWA CITY, Dr. F. L. Roberts; OGDEN, Walter Rosene, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Walter Rosene; OTTUMWA, Dr. W. C. Boone; PIERSON, W. R. Mills; ROCK RAPIDS, Mr. and Mrs. O. S. Thomas; SIGOURNEY, Alice Slate, Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Slate; SIOUX CITY, Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Armour, Mrs. Mary L. Bailey, Mrs. Marie Dales, Mr. and Mrs. R. D. Hissong, Dr. T. C. Stephens, Wm. Youngworth; TAMA, Mrs. J. H. Bancroft, Mrs. J. G. Ennis, Mrs. W. G. MacMartin; VALLEY JUNCTION, Nellie and Lela Fulton, Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Kinnaird; WINTHROP, Elva

Mulford, Paul A. Pierce, Mr. and Mrs. Fred J. Pierce; MADISON, WIS., John N. Ball, P. L. Errington, Aldo Leopold.

**Birds Seen on the Field Trip.**—(Brenton Slough, Fisher's Lake, Crocker Woods, Avon Lake, Water Works Park, etc.; 5:30 A. M. to 12 M.) Black Tern, Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, Scaup, Bittern, Green Heron, Sora, Coot, Wilson's Snipe, Stilt, Pectoral, Least, Solitary, Spotted and Semi-palmated Sandpipers, Lesser Yellow-legs, Killdeer, Senti-palmated Plover, Bob-white, Ring-necked Pheasant, Mourning Dove, Marsh, Cooper's and Red-tailed Hawks, Kingfisher, Hairy, Downy, Red-headed and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Flicker, Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Kingbird, Phoebe, Wood Pewee, Crested and Least Flycatchers, Prairie Horned Lark, Blue Jay, Crow, Bobolink, Cowbird, Yellow-headed and Red-winged Blackbirds, Eastern and Western Meadowlarks, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, Bronzed Grackle, Goldfinch, English, Vesper, Savannah, Lark, White-throated, Chipping, Field and Song Sparrows, Towhee, Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Dickcissel, Purple Martin, Barn, Tree, Bank and Rough-winged Swallows, Migrant Shrike, Red-eyed, Philadelphia, Warbling, Yellow-throated and Blue-headed Vireos, Black and White, Nashville, Orange-crowned, Tennessee, Yellow, Myrtle, Black-poll, Black-throated Green, Palm, Wilson's and Canada Warblers, Maryland Yellow-throat, Redstart, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, House Wren, Marsh Wren, White-breasted Nuthatch, Tufted Titmouse, Chickadee, Wood, Wilson, Gray-cheeked and Olive-backed Thrushes, Robin, Bluebird. Total, 101 Species.

**New Iowa Members.**—The following list includes those who have enrolled since the publication of our last issue: Arthur F. Allen, Sioux City; George E. Bently, Boone; A. F. Den Boer, Des Moines; Harry W. Davidson, Boone; John C. Jago, Waterloo; Mrs. Arthur Lee, Atlantic; Mrs. W. G. MacMartin, Tama; Olivia McCabe, Des Moines; Mrs. F. A. Millard, Burlington; Mrs. Arthur Torson, Cedar Rapids.

New subscribers are: C. N. Davis, Bethany, Missouri; Dr. H. C. Oberholser, Washington, D. C.

## GENERAL NOTES

**Bohemian Waxwings at Independence, Iowa.**—The Bohemian Waxwings paid us a visit March 1, 1932. They had been reported here at an earlier date, but this was our first call. Early in the morning we noticed about two dozen in the garden busily feeding upon the asparagus berries; these berries and the barberries in the shrubs around our house seemed especially interesting to them.

The waxwings were friendly little fellows, coming to the "bird tree" close to the kitchen window, alighting on the car in the drive way, and even venturing under the porch to partake of the berries taken from our winter bouquets and hung out to increase their food supply. They stayed about our grounds for several days. Later they were reported from different parts of town. They appeared here again March 27, but were driven away by the Robins. A dead Bohemian Waxwing was brought in to me on April 6; this was sent to Mr. Allert of McGregor for mounting.—MRS. W. M. WOODWARD, Independence, Iowa.

**Bohemian Waxwings at Fairfield, Iowa.**—A number of Fairfield people had the pleasure of seeing flocks of Bohemian Waxwings in the trees and shrubbery during the week of March 8-15, 1932. This is a northern bird not often seen in this part of the country. This species and the Cedar Waxwing, which closely resembles it but is a little more dove-like in color, lead a nomadic life, appearing in flocks one day and entirely gone the next. The habitat of the Bohemian Waxwing is in the North and it comes farther south when the food supply is limited.

Mrs. C. W. Rains observed a flock of seventeen. They had discovered a clump of high bush cranberries. They stayed in the vicinity for several days until they had devoured all the berries on the bushes and on the ground. They were joined later by about fifteen more. All disappeared when the berries were gone.

For the past two years a Cedar Waxwing has nested in a tree on the A. E. Labagh property, South Highland avenue. Local bird observers say that so far as they know this is the only instance of the kind of which they have knowledge. Mrs. Labagh is anxiously waiting to see whether they will return this year.—PAUL S. JUNKIN, Fairfield, Iowa.

**The Starling Nests at Iowa City.**—During the past three years the European Starling has been a fairly common winter visitor in this part of Iowa. Many dead birds of this species have been brought in to the Museum for identification. The writer has seen large flocks of Starlings associating with Crows that have spent the past winter in this county. The first account of the Starling nesting in Iowa City, however, is reported by Mr. Joseph Whiting who killed four specimens that were building nests in an old hollow tree in his dooryard. Examination of the bodies after the birds were skinned showed crops well filled with insects, and highly enlarged testicles in the males and well developed eggs in the females. While the Starling is an insect-eating bird that has some friends among the people of European origin who will hail its coming with joy, the grower of small fruits, if he does not already know it, will find that there is no joy for him when large flocks of these birds make him a visit.—HOMER R. DILL, Director of Museum of Natural History, State University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, April 15, 1932.

**Early Spring Migrants at Cedar Rapids.**—A pair of Belted Kingfishers have been observed since mid-January, 1932, near the entrance of a small open stream which flows into Cedar Lake. Due to the open winter, they have doubtless remained there all winter. On February 28, 1932, when the first field trip of the year was taken by the Cedar Rapids Bird Club, the Killdeer, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Bronzed Grackle, Meadowlark, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Prairie Horned Lark, Bluebird, Robin, Starling, Red-shouldered Hawk, Mallard, Scaup, Pintail and Herring Gull were among the birds observed. A group of thirty-five Herring Gulls was seen hovering over Cedar Lake during the afternoon and the day following.

W. F. Kubichek, director of the Club, added another chapter to the history of the Starling in Iowa on the same afternoon when, in the vicinity of the Amana Colonies, he observed two Starlings. This is the place where several years ago he observed the first Starlings to be reported in Iowa. Mr. Kubichek also observed the first nesting of Starlings to be reported in Iowa; he found a pair nesting in a hollow tree on the edge of Cedar Lake last spring.

On March 13, Mr. Kubichek discovered a flock of sixteen Bohemian Waxwings in Cedar Rapids. About two weeks earlier he found several of them among a flock of Cedar Waxwings at Swan Lake, near Iowa City. This is our first record of them here for several years.

Ducks to the number of five hundred have been seen on Swan Lake early this spring, among them Canvasbacks, Redheads, Mallards, Ring-necks and Scaups.—MRS. C. C. FLODIN, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

**The Canada Goose and Other Birds at Des Moines.**—Our finding of the Canada Goose on the 1931 Christmas bird census was somewhat amusing. Two days before the census was taken an extra bird appeared at the Waterworks Reservoir with the seven pinioned geese that live there. For several days he was rather shy, always going to the other side of the water when approached and sometimes flying up, but



always returning in a short time. In a short while he accepted the situation as calmly as his mates. At the time we listed him I would say that he had not acquired domestic characteristics; now I would hesitate to list him for such a report. He is still with us (March 7) and we are interested to see if he will go north this spring or stay to mate with one of the captives.

On February 23, 1932, a Mockingbird came to Mrs. Palas' feeding shelf. The bird also fed on a suet stick. It was also seen at feeding shelves one and two blocks away on the same day; in each case it was closely observed. A Mockingbird was reported at the home of Miss Jessie Morrison, in the west end of the city on February 13.

This morning, March 7, five Bohemian Waxwings came to feed at our shelf, where we had put out hemp seed. A large flock of these birds were reported by Mrs. J. E. Stewart at her home last week. They were feeding on Japanese barberry.—ARTHUR J. PALAS, Des Moines, Iowa.

**Prairie Chickens.**—My cousin, C. E. Hayes, saw a flock of forty-one Prairie Chickens about two miles south of Lamont, Buchanan County, Iowa, on January 9, 1932. About two weeks later he saw a flock of eight north of Lamont. We have always seen Prairie Chickens in that vicinity, but often not more than two or three at a time.—MRS. R. I. BORDNER, Hudson, Iowa.

**Fall and Winter Notes from Northwestern Iowa.**—I was at Cherokee about the first of October, 1931, and while driving a short distance east and south of town, I saw a Bluebird. When I stopped the car I saw about ten or twelve more. Turning off in the direction the birds had taken, I went through a large gravel pit. At the opposite side of the pit was a great flock of Bluebirds. Some were on the ground, some were on the weeds, while others were in the trees from the lowest to the highest limbs. They were constantly moving, apparently feeding as they moved slowly forward. It was impossible to make even a close estimate, but I judged there were no less than 100 and probably there were twice that many.

During the last few days of December, 1931, I saw in our back yard a Catbird. The next day I saw it again, this time in a lilac bush where Catbirds have nested for several years. Shortly afterward I saw it with some English Sparrows, eating in a garden in the next block. That day Mrs. Thomas found a Brown Thrasher eating in our back yard. I cleared away the snow for a feeding place and for several days both birds ate in the yard. The Catbird was last seen on December 31. There had been very cold weather before that time. Rock Rapids is five miles from the Minnesota line and about eighteen miles from the nearest point in South Dakota. Our coldest weather this winter has been about seventeen degrees below zero.

The Brown Thrasher was about the yard practically every day from the time we first saw him until January 9, after which he was not seen for about three weeks. On the first day of February, he was back in the yard again. He was very bedraggled and apparently not well fed. When I returned that week-end, I observed the thrasher at rather close range. I noticed that he had difficulty in standing, and I concluded that a foot had been frosted. He has now (February 15) either learned to balance himself or has recovered from his difficulty. The problem of feeding him has been solved satisfactorily. We saw him carry pieces of bread from around the neighborhood and eat them in a cement area-way in front of a basement window. We place food there and he knows where to get it. This morning I observed him from the basement and he seems to be very vigorous. I could not see his legs. We believe

he stays at night in a shed on an unoccupied property, but I have not gone at night to look for him, as I did not want to alarm him.

I held court in Sibley on December 29, 1931, and on that day three Robins were seen there. They had been there all fall and winter.

While riding on the train in Lyon County on February 14, I saw several flocks of Prairie Chickens. There were at least 100 birds in the largest flock. I also saw several coveys of Hungarian Partridges and a few pheasants. The Pheasants are much more plentiful than the other game birds mentioned. The Prairie Chickens winter with us, but it has been five or six years since I have seen them nest in Lyon County. Although we have more Prairie Chickens this winter than have been seen for several years, they seem to be nearing extinction. Two years ago I was in three counties in Minnesota when there was an open season, and none of the hunters I talked with saw Prairie Chickens or heard of any being shot.—O. S. THOMAS, Rock Rapids, Iowa.

**The Gulls and Terns of the Iowa Lakes.**—Just before the ice goes out of the lakes in the spring, great white birds may be seen walking on its surface or swimming where the ice has broken and clear water appears. Many of these birds are Herring Gulls. They will not be with us all summer but some of them will be with us a month or two. It is not easy to distinguish them from another gull, one-fourth smaller but very similar in color. These smaller ones, the Ring-billed Gulls, may be known by the dark ring around the bill, half way from its end. It is necessary to use a good field-glass to see this difference for the Herring Gull has a red mark on its lower bill in about the same location. If seen near each other the smaller size of the Ring-billed Gull will identify it.

Both of these gulls have white heads. A little later in the spring the black headed Franklin's gull will be seen. It will not do to call these birds "sea-gulls" for they are not of the sea. They are birds of the sloughs and lakes of the prairies. One of the outstanding sights of the bird world is the flocking of Franklin's Gulls on our lakes in the fall. From about the middle of September until the middle or last of October the birds come in great clouds from miles around to roost on the lakes. As early as one o'clock in the afternoon lines of gulls may be seen headed towards the lake. Sometimes they fly in lines several abreast, lines that require hours to pass. Sometimes they form in huge wedges, dozens of birds in a group and sometimes with one side of the "V" longer than the other and another "V" formed on this, or even more than one. Sometimes they fly in flocks as do blackbirds. Some days there are many more birds than on others but I believe that this is only relative for when the birds leave the lake in the morning more of them fly with the wind than in any other direction so that the evening flight against the wind is usually the greatest. As yet I have been able to find no reason for the variation in their flying formation, except that as darkness approaches they fly in more compact flocks. I have seen them when it was so dark that they could only be seen if outlined against the sky and have heard the rush of their wings after the shadows had deepened so that I could no longer distinguish them.

They are a beautiful sight in the sunshine as they turn and tip in their flight, showing now their duller colored backs and now their white under-parts so that at a distance they may be said to twinkle in the sunlight. Sometimes, especially in the forenoon, as they drift lazily away from the lake in open flocks, some current of air will catch them and they will be borne to great heights. One's eyes will pick them out far

above only to catch the twinkle of a white breast higher and again higher until they seem like specks of silver dust.

One evening last fall I estimated the number of Franklin's Gulls that were on Spirit Lake at that time. By sighting along the shore I concluded that there was a raft of birds at least  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles square. I have been fairly close to the birds with a boat at times and believe that one bird in an area of two square feet is a very conservative estimate of the density of the flock.

Black Terns are very abundant during migration. Terns may be known from gulls as they "turn" their heads with the bill pointing down when in flight. Gulls carry theirs with the bill pointing forward. Terns have deeply forked tails. Besides the Black Tern, the Common Tern and Forster's Tern visit us. They may be known by their light underparts and black-capped head. The body and head of the Black Tern is all black in the spring and early summer. As winter approaches we find Black Terns with their plumage variously mottled, until late in the fall they attain their all white winter dress.

All of our gulls and terns are exceedingly useful birds as they destroy large numbers of noxious insects. They may be seen picking up insect larvae in the freshly upturned earth as they follow the farmer's plow.  
—DR. F. L. R. ROBERTS, Iowa City, Iowa.

**Winter Bird Life at Pomeroy, Iowa.**—Today, March 6, 1932, the mercury at the warmest hour of the day hovers around 10 degrees F., and one feels that the birds are especially grateful for the food supply that they know is always waiting for them in our unattractive backyard.

To satisfy my curiosity, I kept a record for fifteen minutes at about two o'clock this afternoon. Chickadees topped the list with eleven visits averaging thirty-four seconds each, the longest stay being two minutes. The White-breasted Nuthatches called four times, averaging seventy-six seconds per visit. Our one and only junco made a prolonged call of six minutes. There was, of course, the usual run of English Sparrows.

Our feeder is enclosed with glass on the sides, back and top, making a typical sun-room. The nuthatch is especially inclined to take advantage of this fact on very cold, windy days, and sits at the front of the enclosure as tho he had not a care in the world. The junco always shares his lot with the sparrows on the ground.

We are wondering how our Robin is faring. He seemed puzzled over prevailing weather conditions yesterday and said not even a "chirp." And the Bluebird seen on February 28 must surely realize his mistake.

It is always interesting to compare bird lists a year or more apart. For example, last year on February 22, while a mourning cloak butterfly seemed quite comfortable in the woods we found bird life quite abundant. This year, on February 21, we waded thru much deep snow and crossed the river on thick ice at will, with only a meager list as our reward. The two lists are combined below; the first number after each name is for February 22, 1931, and the second for February 21, 1932. Hawks, 2, 4; Bob-white, 11, 23; Ring-necked Pheasant, 0, 8; Barred Owl, 1, 1; Red-bellied Woodpecker, 1, 0; Hairy Woodpecker, 2, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 6, 2; Prairie Horned Lark, 40, 109; Crow, 41, 16; Chickadee, 18, 8; White-breasted Nuthatch, 12, 4; Brown Creeper, 1, 0; Meadowlark, 0, 2; Robin, 24, 0; Bluebird, 6, 0; Bronzed Grackle, 3, 0; Slate-colored Junco, 2, 0; Tree Sparrow, 62, 0.

We noticed in the December issue of 'Iowa Bird Life' that Mrs. Wendelburg of Des Moines mentioned a scarcity of juncos. Our observations seem to indicate a similar scarcity here. I would like to know if others have observed the Tree Sparrow to be scarce during

January and February, 1932. On February 7, and again on the 21st, we could not find one individual, while on the 28th they seemed quite abundant at places where we had expected to find them before.—MYRLE L. JONES, Pomeroy, Iowa.

**A Note from Hollywood, California.**—We have had a cold and wet winter (1931-1932), and as a consequence there have been more than the usual number of sparrows about. There have also been a few Robins and an occasional Alaska Hermit Thrush. Early in February there was a large flock of Cedar Waxwings here. An unusual circumstance is the fondness for nuts displayed by Mockingbirds. The California Jays were at them as usual, but this year both the Mockingbirds and the Chinese Spotted Doves were seen to feed upon them often. Neither the nuthatches nor the woodpeckers seem to have found them. The Audubon Warblers have not been as numerous as usual. From my back yard I can hear the AFRICAN lion roar, the CHINESE Dove coo, and the ENGLISH Sparrow chirp. Of course, the lion is on a movie lot, but the others are to be seen in numbers every day.—GUY C. RICH, Hollywood, Calif.

**A Locomotive Strikes a Goldfinch.**—On October 10, 1931, my husband's fireman rescued a female Goldfinch that was struck by a C. and N. W. freight locomotive near Quarry, Iowa. It was about 10:00 A. M., and the train was traveling forty miles an hour, when the fireman saw a small bird hit the side of the engine and drop down to the running board. He crawled out and brought it into the cab. When my husband had held it in his hand for five minutes, admiring the dainty little creature, she opened her eyes for an instant and looked at the strange surroundings in which she found herself. The men made her a nest out of the fireman's lunch sack and some engine waste.

When they arrived at Belle Plaine, they left her at the roundhouse in the caller's care, while they went to bed. That night the Goldfinch made the trip to Boone with them in the cab. The bird still seemed dazed when they left Belle Plaine, but at 1:00 A. M., when my husband reached home, she seemed to be considerably improved and we gave her roomier quarters. Next morning she ate seeds, drank water, and chirped cheerfully to Buster, my canary. Several times I found her clinging to the screen which covered her box.

That afternoon we took the box to the yard and removed the cover. The Goldfinch remained in the box fully ten minutes, then she flew to a wire overhead. After a second on the wire, she flew directly south and was soon out of sight. It was a bright, sunny day. Could the sun have been her compass?

In the fall of 1930 a pair of Goldfinches were less fortunate. My husband found them dead on the pilot of the locomotive.

During winter, Mr. Buzby carries cracked corn with him on many of his daylight trips. This he scatters from the cab window wherever he has seen nearby coveys of Quail.—MRS. WILLIAM BUZBY, Boone, Iowa.

**Comparing Two Recent Iowa Bird Lists.**—During the latter part of 1931 two county or regional papers were published in Iowa—the 18-page booklet on "Birds of Sioux City, Iowa", by Walter W. Bennett and the 72-page "Birds of Polk County, Iowa", by Philip A. DuMont.

It is of interest to note how closely the two lists coincide, while the areas treated are some 200 miles distant. The Sioux City list contains 292 species and subspecies while the Polk County paper gives 289 with 17 others entered hypothetically. Agreement is noted in all subspecies except the Song Sparrow and Northern Yellow-throat, and either may be correct. A comparison shows 27 species contained in the Sioux

City paper not listed for Polk County or included there hypothetically, while there are 24 species in the Polk County list not recorded at Sioux City.

These 27 species from Sioux City are: Eastern Glossy Ibis, Cinnamon Teal, White-winged Scoter, Mississippi Kite, Richardson's Pigeon Hawk, European Partridge, Piping Plover, Black-necked Stilt, Red Phalarope, Louisiana Paroquet, Burrowing Owl, Sennett's Nighthawk, Lewis's Woodpecker, Thick-billed Red-wing, Black-headed Grosbeak, Lazuli Bunting, Gray-crowned Rosy Finch, Interior Song Sparrow, Dakota Song Sparrow, and Chesnut-collared Longspur. And these were included in the Polk County list hypothetically: Prairie Falcon, Little Brown Crane, Northern Phalarope, Rock Wren, White-rumped Shrike, Blue Grosbeak and Arctic Towhee.

The 24 species recorded for Polk County but not listed at Sioux City are: Red-throated Loon, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Trumpeter Swan, American Brant, Western Red-tailed Hawk, Krider's Hawk, Prairie Sharp-tailed Grouse, Yellow Rail, Bewick's Wren, Eskimo Curlew, Caspian Tern, Worm-eating Warbler, Golden winged Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Northern Prairie Warbler, Sycamore Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, Summer Tanager and Eastern Song Sparrow.

The Starling was included in the Sioux City list rightly enough, as it certainly will reach there in the next two or three years.—PHILIP A. DU MONT, Berkeley, California.

**Notes on Our Purple Martin Colony.**—Our city park erected a beautiful Purple Martin house which was 'architecturally' perfect even to the bright red chimney which graced the roof. The landscape artist had chosen a location in a clearing, far away from any wires. So far the only tenants have been English Sparrows, and not many of them. I wonder how nearly right we are in our guess—no wires, no martins.

Our little soap-box affair with its green roof is just to their liking. It would never take a prize in a bird-house contest, but we have never lacked for tenants. The only trouble is, it isn't large enough! Our back yard is a network of wires. Three wires pass within four feet of the martin house on the south and four on the north. These wires are a great attraction for the martins.

The first martin "scout" circled the house as the pole and house were being erected. This year (1931), the scout arrived on April 13 and looked the place over. Most years, the scout has been soon followed by several males, but this year both males and females arrived the same day and quickly set up housekeeping.

One rainy afternoon in late May, twenty-three females or immature birds and one adult male all sat on the same wire for a long time. Occasionally the male would fly to the house and back, always resuming his place at the same end of the line of birds. That evening we watched them and to the best of our knowledge, all but seven of the birds found sleeping quarters in the four unoccupied rooms. They must have slept four in a bed! Next day they all left. Perhaps they were young birds on their way north for the first time and stopped over night with our colony. However, judging from the excited chattering and scolding, they were not very welcome visitors.

The baby martins were old enough this year when the hot weather came in June to hang their heads out of the doorways and await their parents' arrival with food. Each year we notice a sentinel watching on the nearby wires all during the feeding season. Whether or not the same bird is on duty all day, we do not know, but at any rate all during the daylight hours one bird stands guard. We do know that the guard-

ing bird was not the parent of any of the broods being fed at that time, and when the others had settled for the night, the sentinel would go in to his room, which seemed to be used for his sleeping quarters alone.

The sentinel guarded equally well each family of young martins; if anyone became a little too venturesome, the sentinel flew to the nearest wire or to the porch and scolded him. One day a young Robin flew to the roof of the house. The sentinel was after him immediately, and martins came from all directions to join in the fight. One evening a Bluebird with a dragon fly in his beak flew to a wire near the martin house. Almost immediately a martin tried to take it from him and an aerial battle ensued in which the martin found his equal until his friends joined him. In the shuffle the dragon fly dropped to the ground and none of them got it.

One mother bird had a bent tail feather and her young recognized her coming with food long before we could distinguish the bent feather.

In Forbush's text on Purple Martins, he mentions their carrying fresh green leaves into their houses, presumably to reduce the heat by evaporation. Many times we saw them carrying in green leaves, and in our yard they always took leaves from a poplar tree.

When we made our bird-pool in our back yard, we did not know that we were adding an attraction for the martins. The water attracts the dragon flies, or skimmers, and they are a favorite food of the martins. The birds sit on the wires above the pool and wait for the flies to circle above the water, then they dart down and catch them.

We were very glad to witness the flying lessons of the martins. The old birds did 'stunt' flying that would make an army aviator turn green with envy. Occasionally a young bird would light in a treetop and if he stayed too long an old martin would take food to him. The young ones did much less soaring, flapped their wings more, and in lighting upon the wires extended their feet downward much sooner than the mature birds did. One mother bird coaxed her youngster to fly from one wire to another by tempting him with food. Another had less patience and crowded her child until he lost his balance and had to fly.

At sundown they all came home to "roost." The youngsters had had a wonderful day and were not ready to settle down for the night. One mother had to shove one of her children into the house and then guard the doorway. Soon after the young had learned to fly, their numbers began to increase and evening found them all trying to find sleeping quarters.—MRS. WILLIAM BUZBY, Boone, Iowa.

## RECENT BIRD BOOKS

"*The Birds of Louisiana.*"—Louisiana is a very interesting state ornithologically and this new and well-printed book on its birds will prove a valuable addition to the library of every Iowa bird student, even though Louisiana is considerable distance from Iowa. Audubon made many of his studies of birds in that state, and since his time numerous other ornithologists have reveled in the wealth of bird life found there. In this 600-page volume the birds of the state are treated very comprehensively. Although the author is anonymous, the careful preparation of the work is reflected in the finished production. The book is non-technical to a great extent and is written in a style that is very readable and will be easily understood by readers of all ages. It should prove an admirable reference work for the schools of the state. Each species is given a page or two of description, and a small line-drawing illustrates the bird. Most of the drawings, though small, are fairly accurate and will be of more help to amateurs than a detailed printed description of plumages. There are seven colored plates borrowed from the Audubon Societies and numerous halftones.

Through the generosity of the State of Louisiana, the book is placed within the reach of everyone. It is sent out gratuitously to all bird students; an advance of twenty-five cents to cover mailing is all that is required (address the Dept. of Conservation, New Orleans). Those who are collecting the state bird books should not overlook this important addition to the series.—F. J. P.

\* \* \* \* \*

**"Ohio Game and Song Birds in Winter,"** by Lawrence E. Hicks. This 68-page bulletin is made up of a series of six papers which cover the following topics: Emergency feeding of game and song birds in winter, a report of winter feeding experiments, conservation and present checks upon the increase of these birds, planting for their attraction, a list of all birds recorded from Ohio in winter, and a bibliography. Our space allows us to review this bulletin only very superficially. Mr. Hicks has made a very thorough study of his subject and the bulletin is worthy of careful reading. The hundreds of people who find pleasure in feeding the small winter birds at food-shelves and suet-racks near their homes would do well to go a step farther and, following Mr. Hicks' carefully prepared instructions, provide food for Bob-whites and other bird residents of the snow-covered fields. The annotated list of 159 Ohio winter birds is a very worthwhile feature. The booklet is distributed free by the Division of Conservation of the Ohio Dept. of Agriculture, Columbus.

It seems somewhat doubtful whether farmers will react kindly toward Mr. Hicks' suggestions for feeding and increasing the Ring-necked Pheasant, to which considerable space is devoted. In Iowa, at least, we know that the farmer is inclined to regard the pheasant as an expensive pest introduced ostensibly to furnish amusement for sportsmen, and it is therefore a little difficult to visualize him leaving a portion of his crop of corn standing in the field during the winter months to feed the pheasants. The farmer is never swayed by sentiment, and alterations in his farming methods will be made only when such changes appear to be a matter of dollars and cents.—F. J. P.

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**"The Naturalists' Directory."**—A new edition of "The Naturalists' Directory," published by Samuel E. Cassino, Salem, Mass., is now being compiled and will be printed some time in the near future. The first edition of this book was published in 1877; the volume now under preparation will be the 26th edition. The Directory is a book of 300 pages and contains a surprisingly large amount of information. Under each state of the United States is a sizable list of its naturalists, given in alphabetical order, with addresses for each, together with a brief statement of the field in which the naturalist is particularly interested, whether he has a collection of specimens and is willing to exchange, and other information. The Directory includes Canadian naturalists and many in Central and South America. The book is valuable to collectors in various branches of natural science, and is helpful to those who wish to open correspondence with naturalists in other localities. A general index gives access to all names without the necessity of searching through individual state lists.

In spinning through the pages one notices that the number of persons listed as interested in ornithology is very large. Mr. Cassino wishes to enlarge the list of Iowa naturalists in his coming edition (there were about 90 in the 1931 book), and we suggest that our members send him their names and addresses and state what branch they are interested in. Although the Directory is sold for a small sum, no charge is made for the insertion of names and no obligation to buy the book is incurred.—F. J. P.

Send us the names of your friends who are interested in birds. We shall be glad to send them sample copies of IOWA BIRD LIFE and invite them to join the Union.

—The Editor.

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